

R E M A R K S

Applicants have considered the outstanding official action. It is respectfully submitted that all the claims are directed to allowable subject matter as set forth below.

Claims 26 and 27 have been stated to be allowable and are only objected to as being dependent on a rejected base claim. Claim 26 has been rewritten in independent form. Claim 27 has been amended to be dependent only on claim 26. New claim 31 is prior claim 27/25. Accordingly, claims 26 and 27 are in condition for allowance. Formal allowance of claims 26 and 27 is respectfully requested.

The sole rejection is of claims 21-25 and 28-30 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) over U.S. Patent No. 4,307,141 (Walbrun) in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,214,146 (Merker). Applicants respectfully submit that claims 21-25 and 28-30 are directed to patentable subject matter.

The Examiner considers the land regions 24 of Walbrun to form a peripheral zone. Assuming land regions 24 could be considered a peripheral zone, land regions 24 at the most could only be considered a peripheral zone of a portion of a product but not a peripheral zone of the product as claimed by applicants. To clarify the wording of claim 21, the claim has been amended to provide that the at least two superposed plies are cut or precut into a format with free

edges. Support is present in the captioned application at page 4, line 2, and Figure 1 illustrating a product of the invention. The claimed edges therefor are distinct from the "edges" of a portion of a product as disclosed in Walbrun.

Further, the Examiner considers land regions 24 of Walbrun to be compacted zones. Applicants respectfully submit that this is not correct. The shape of the product taught in Walbrun is made by embossing a web. No compacted zone as claimed by applicants is present in the structure of Walbrun since such zones are joined by an adhesive. A compacted zone is a zone wherein fibers are crushed to provide a junction of two plies. See, for example, 109 in Figure 2B of the captioned application. Applicants have amended the wording of claim 21 to clarify what is being claimed. The claim now reads that the plies are joined together by marking patterns at compacted zones on one side of the plies without corresponding salients on an opposite side of the plies.

The embossing pattern 26 taught in Walbrun is not an embossing pattern as claimed by applicants as evidenced by the manner that thickness is provided to the product. The thickness of the central zone of Walbrun is not provided by the perforations formed by members 26, but rather by embossment of the total central zone. As set forth at column 3, lines 27-35, the finished sheet is rendered highly

absorbent by the presence of inwardly projecting mutually confronting fibers 21c and 22c disposed about and created by the formulation of perforations 21a and 22a by members 26 in the pocket-portions of the plies. The claimed product to the contrary has an embossing pattern inducing a higher thickness of the central part of the product with regard to the thickness of the peripheral zone.

Merker does not provide for the shortcomings of Walbrun. Merker is relied on for providing a product without glue. Merker, however, contains thermal binder fibers which act as an adhering substance. Applicants' claimed invention provides for joining plies by marking patterns at compacted zones on one side of the plies without corresponding salients on an opposite side of the plies.

Accordingly, applicants respectfully submit that Walbrun in combination with Merker does not render the claimed invention obvious within the meaning of 35 U.S.C. §103. No teaching or suggestion is provided by either Walbrun or Merker to modify the structures described therein to obtain the claimed invention. Withdrawal of the §103 rejection is, therefore, respectfully requested.

Reconsideration and allowance of the application are respectfully urged.

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Respectfully submitted,

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